A HISTORY OF THE MURALS IN EVANS HALL

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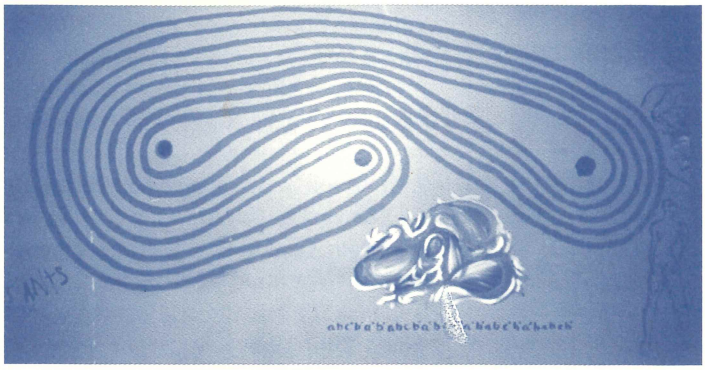
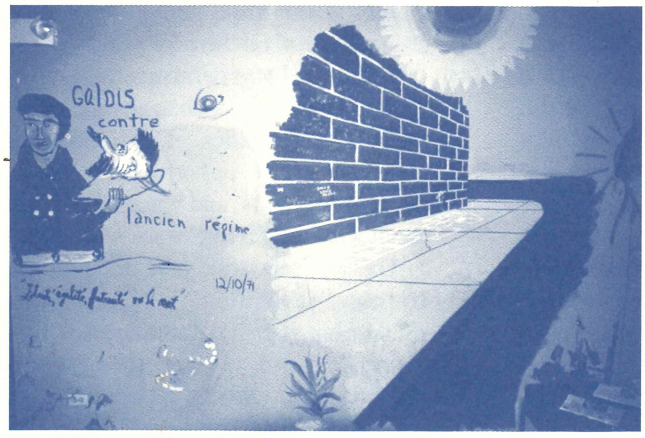
Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from Paris, land of retirement where I don't have to teach calculus anymore and can do math research all the time.



I wanted to comment on the history of the old "murals" on the 7th floor wall and elsewhere (in Evans Hall). In the late 1960s, (you can get the exact date from looking at the wall), Steve Smale and others started a departmental newspaper for students and faculty, unfortunately entitled *Motherfunctor,* with interesting philosophical and math articles. It existed for a short time.



In this spirit, I assisted in organizing some seminars on creativity. I still remember one remarkable seminar where Cal Moore, Steve Smale, and S.S. Chern spoke. Smale said things like, "Math is fill-in: integers to rationals, rational functions to holomorphic functions, etc., etc." Smale also noted: "It is interesting when one can prove a theorem and its negative, although that situation is usually resolved quickly." And I remember how he explained to the grad students that you would start trying to prove a theorem with A implies B, and that doesn't quite work, so it's *A + something* implies *B + something else,* etc. And a year later you would have a completely different, true theorem!

Smale thought that we should let the government and the world know all about math, and it should be copiously supported by the society, in money and in prestige. Chern thought we shouldn't let anybody know what we were doing, because if they did know what we were doing, they wouldn't let anybody do it, it being so much fun. Chern added that society's knowledge of mathematics, together with inflation, were the great enemies to the professor on a fixed salary.

Sometime after this seminar, I organized a one-hour talk in 60 Evans by an assistant professor in the architecture department entitled *Fascism and Architecture,* being as Evans Hall was despised by many as a dehumanizing workplace. The subject of the talk was the effect of architecture on politics and the spirit. I remember the speaker showed slides of Hitler waving to crowds from the balcony of buildings in Berlin.

After the applause abated at the end of this well-received talk, I passed out paintbrushes and paint cans. Even Sarah Hallam (senior administrative assistant of the Department for many, many years) grabbed a paintbrush. We rushed upstairs and painted some of the walls on the 7th to 10th floors.

Voilà! That's how the "murals" got there. Some were painted by famous mathematicians – Thurston and Sullivan. And I know *La Mort de Galois* on the 7th floor was painted by my son's uncle, Jack Knutson. I thought perhaps some of you – young and old – might like to know the history of these paintings. I hope as many of them can be preserved as possible.

Best regards. Ω